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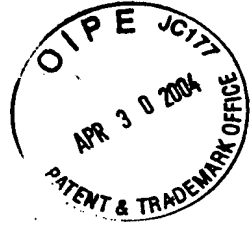
A POLICY SETTABLE PEER-TO-PEER SESSION APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the peer-to-peer communication of one-to-one type, or in particular to a session relay apparatus in which the network operation policy for the relay nodes on the network can be set and canceled with the start or the end of the peer-to-peer communication as a motive.

The network operated and managed by a network provider such as a communication carrier or ISP (Internet Service Provider) is configured of a plurality of relay nodes interconnected for relay the user packets. In the network configured of the relay nodes, the network operation policy for controlling the route and the communication quality of the user packets is called simply as the policy. This policy is set for each application or each user in accordance with the priority or security of the packet relay operation. The relay nodes making up the network perform the process of relay the packets in accordance with the policy thus set.

The network has arranged therein a policy server for uniquely managing the policy, and this policy server reflects the policy in the network by distributing the policy to a multiplicity of relay nodes constituting the network. A well-known protocol



for distributing the policy from the policy server is
COPS (Common Open Policy Service) defined in the
standard recommendation RFC (Request for Comments)
prepared by IETF (Internet Engineering Task Force) and
5 issued by IAB (Internet Architecture Board).

The network provider can set in a network,
for example, a policy for priority control in which the
packet of a specific user is repeated preferentially
over the packets of the other users. In this case, the
10 policy server classifies specific influent packets in
the network into a plurality of priority control
classes for the relay node called the edge node
arranged in the network boundary, and distributes the
policy for setting in the packet header the value
15 called DSCP (Diffserv Code Point) corresponding to each
priority control class. The edge node with this policy
set therein determines whether the packets flowing into
the network configured of the relay nodes meet the
conditions set by the policy, and in the presence of a
20 packet meeting the particular conditions, the DSCP
value is set in the header of the packet in accordance
with the priority control class assigned to the
particular packet. Each relay node making up the
network performs the priority control of the packets in
25 accordance with the DSCP value set by the edge node.

An example of priority control of the packets
with the DSCP value set by the edge node is described
in JP-A-2000-253047. In the technique called Diffserv

(Differentiated Services) described in this publication, the relay node called the core node arranged in the network transfers packets by priority control in accordance with the order of priority set in the DSCP value under the rules predetermined based on the DSCP value in the header of the received packet. This technique called Diffserv is used, as in the IP (Internet Protocol) telephone, to reduce the transfer delay in transmitting/receiving, on the IP network, the packets requiring the real time property such as audio packets and video packets.

In the peer-to-peer communication of one-to-one type like the IP telephone, on the other hand, a session is established between two communication terminals by a session control protocol typically including SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) defined in the standard recommendation RFC 3261, and the peer-to-peer communication conducted with real time data such as voice and image on the session thus established.

The term "session" is defined as the period from the start to the end of the logical connection for communication executed between two communication terminals. Also, the term "peer-to-peer communication" is defined as a form of direct communication established between communication terminals without any server therebetween. In SIP, a session relay apparatus for relay the session control message searches for the terminal of the other party of communication, holds the

information required for the peer-to-peer communication including the address of the communication terminal, the port number and the data number or otherwise executes the session management. The "session control
5 message" repeated by the session control message is defined as a message transmitted or received prior to the start or end of the session between communication terminals.

In this peer-to-peer communication, the
10 contents of the data transmitted and received between the communication terminals for each session may be different, include audio data or dynamic image data even in the communication between the same terminals. In such a case, packets are required to be repeated
15 with the proper policy in accordance with the contents of the data, i.e. the contents of the communication. In the case where the network policy is controlled by the policy server as described above, the start and end of the peer-to-peer communication cannot be detected by
20 the policy server, and therefore, the operator of the policy server is required to set the proper policy in accordance with the contents of the communication for the edge nodes in accordance with the start and end of the peer-to-peer communication. In this method,
25 however, an increased network size requires frequent policy setting process, and therefore the setting by the operator may fail to meet the requirements.

In the method for setting in the edge nodes

all the policies on the communication terminal for the peer-to-peer communication, on the other hand, the search process for the conditions of classification of the policy control in the edge nodes increases with the
5 increase in the network scale. The increased search process imposes a processing burden on the edge nodes, resulting in an increased packet relay delay for real-time packets.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a policy settable peer-to-peer session relay apparatus, which detects the start and end of the peer-to-peer communication between communication terminals, and and sets or cancels the
15 policy for the edge node containing each communication terminal. As a result, the operator is not required to perform the policy setting operation, and the packet relay delay at the edge nodes otherwise caused by the unrequired policy setting process is prevented.

20 Specifically, there is provided a session relay apparatus, wherein each relay node includes a mechanism for establishing a session between communication terminals, a mechanism for generating a policy and a mechanism for distributing the policy
25 generated, thereby making it possible to generate and distribute a policy in accordance with the establishment of a session.

The above and other objects, features and advantages will be made apparent by the detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

5 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a session relay apparatus according to the invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing an example of a
10 mesh configuration of a communication network using a session relay apparatus according to the invention.

Fig. 3 shows a sequence of the communication steps for starting the peer-to-peer communication.

Fig. 4 is a diagram for explaining an example
15 of the session information and the peer-to-peer communication information in the INVITE message.

Fig. 5 shows a table structure representing an example configuration of a policy storage unit.

Fig. 6 shows a table structure representing
20 an example configuration of a communication terminal-relay node correspondence storage unit.

Fig. 7 is a diagram for explaining the contents of the policy generated by the policy generating unit.

Fig. 8 is a sequence diagram showing the
25 communication steps to end the peer-to-peer communication.

Fig. 9 is a flowchart for explaining the operation of the policy generating unit.

Fig. 10 shows a mesh configuration as another configuration of the communication network using the
5 session relay apparatus according to the invention.

Fig. 11 is a diagram for explaining an example of the session information and the peer-to-peer communication information in the OK message.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

10 An embodiment of the invention is explained below with reference to a case in which SIP is used as a peer-to-peer communication session control protocol and COPS as a policy distribution protocol. In embodying the invention, the session control protocol
15 is not limited to SIP, and the policy distribution protocol other than COPS may be used.

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing a block configuration of a session relay apparatus according to the invention. A session relay apparatus 10 according
20 to the invention comprises a packet transmitter/receiver 100 for transmitting/receiving IP packets, a session control unit 110 for controlling the peer-to-peer communication session, a session storage unit 120 for holding the session status, a policy distribution
25 unit 200 for distributing a policy to edge nodes, a policy generating unit 210 for generating a policy, a policy storage unit 220 for storing the policy

generated, and a communication terminal-relay node
correspondence storage unit 230 for holding the
correspondence between each communication terminal and
a corresponding edge node for accommodating the
5 particular communication terminal. In this
configuration, the session relay apparatus 10 receives
a peer-to-peer communication session control message
transmitted from the peer-to-peer communication
terminal 15 on the IP network and transfers the peer-
10 to-peer communication session control message to the
session relay apparatus 10 for managing a destination
communication terminal. The session relay apparatus 10
distributes the policy to the edge node 20
accommodating the communication terminal at the start
15 and end of the session.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing a mesh network
configuration in which the session relay apparatus
according to the invention is used with the IP network
of Diffserv as a QoS-controllable IP network. The
20 policy used for the network is not limited to the
priority control using the DSCP value based on Diffserv
but may be other policies for embodying the invention.

More specifically, a mesh configuration
configured of an edge node 20 providing a relay node
25 and a core node 30 and the operation are shown for the
peer-to-peer communication with a QoS policy set by the
DSCP value between a peer-to-peer communication
terminal 15a having an IP address of 192.168.10.1 and a

destination communication terminal 15b having an IP address of 192.168.20.1 through an IP network capable of QoS control based on the DSCP value.

In starting the peer-to-peer communication
5 with the communication terminal 15b, the first step is for the communication terminal 15a to transfer a peer-to-peer communication session control message requesting the session relay apparatus 10a having the IP addresses 192.168.100.10 to start the peer-to-peer
10 communication with the communication terminal 15b. The peer-to-peer communication session control message from the communication terminal 15a is transmitted to the communication terminal 15b through the relay apparatus 10a according to the invention and the relay apparatus
15 10b having the IP address 192.168.100.20 for managing the communication terminal 15b. In the process, the relays apparatus 10a and 10b analyze the peer-to-peer communication session control message individually, and extracting the QoS classification conditions for the
20 peer-to-peer communication, generate a QoS policy for communication between the communication terminals 15a and 15b. The term "the QoS classification conditions", as described later with reference to Fig. 7, is defined as the conditions including the information for
25 identifying a packet determined by the address value and the port number of the packet, and a packet satisfying the conditions is assigned a DSCP value adapted for the particular conditions. The QoS policy

generated is set in the edge node 20a of IP address 192.168.100.1 accommodating the communication terminal 15a and the edge node 20b of IP address 192.168.100.2 accommodating the communication terminal 15b. By doing
5 so, these edge nodes are governed by the policy for setting the DSCP value predetermined for the packets meeting the QoS classification conditions.

The session relays apparatus according to the invention and an example of the operation of a
10 communication network (the QoS-controlled peer-to-peer communication operation between the terminals) using the same session relays apparatus is explained below with reference to Figs. 3 to 9.

Fig. 3 is a sequence diagram showing the
15 communication process for the communication terminal A (15a) to start the peer-to-peer communication with the communication terminal B (15b).

First, the communication terminal A (15a) sends an INVITE message 501 providing a session control
20 message requesting the session relay apparatus A (10a) to start the peer-to-peer communication with the communication terminal B. Fig. 4 shows the contents of the INVITE message sent from the communication terminal A (10a). The header of the control message provides
25 the session information 800, and the portion stored in the payload of the control message and described by SDP (Session Description Protocol) provides the peer-to-peer communication information 801. As described

above, the session information contains information required to uniquely identify the session such as ID information for the communication terminal, and the peer-to-peer communication information contains
5 information required to specify the contents of the peer-to-peer communication such as the communication data type and the protocol used for communication of the particular data type. It is seen from Fig. 4 that the transmitter IP address is 192.168.10.1(810), the
10 destination port number is 49170(820), the communication data is audio, and RTP (Realtime Transport Protocol) is used as a communication protocol.

The session relay apparatus A (10a) that has
15 received the INVITE message analyzes the contents of the INVITE message through the session control unit 110, and transfers the INVITE message 503 to the session relay apparatus B (10b), while at the same time responding to the communication terminal A (15a) with a
20 trying message 504 indicating the transfer of the INVITE message. The session control unit 110 also delivers to the policy generating unit 210 the session information 800 and the peer-to-peer communication information 801 stored in the INVITE message. The
25 policy generating unit 210 holds the session information 800 and the peer-to-peer communication information 801 thus delivered (502). In this case, the policy generating unit 210 may hold either the

whole or at least the required part of the session
information 800 or the peer-to-peer communication
information 801. Also, the session control unit 110
may deliver only at least the required part of the
5 session information 800 and the peer-to-peer
communication information 801 to the policy generating
unit 210.

The session relay apparatus B (10b) that has
received the INVITE message from the session relay
10 apparatus A (10a) transfers the INVITE message 505 to
the communication terminal B (15b) and responds to the
session relay apparatus A (10a) with the trying message
506.

In the case where a ringing message 507
15 indicating that the communication terminal B (15b) that
has received the INVITE message 505 is in preparation
for communication is transmitted to the session relay
apparatus B (10b) as a response, the session relay
apparatus B (10b) transmits a ringing message 508 to
20 the relay apparatus A (10a). The relay apparatus A
(10a) that has received this ringing message 508
similarly transmits a ringing message 509 to the
communication terminal A (15a).

Once the preparation for the peer-to-peer
25 communication is over and the communication becomes
possible, the communication terminal B (15b) transfers
an OK message 510 to the session relay apparatus B
(10b). Fig. 11 shows the contents of the OK message

510 transmitted from the communication terminal B (15b). Like the INVITE message shown in Fig. 4, the header of the OK message constituting the session control message based on SIP constitutes the session information 900, under which the portion described by SDP (Session Description Protocol) provides the peer-to-peer communication information 901. Fig. 11 indicates that the destination IP address is 192.168.20.1.820 (910), the transmitter port number is 49171, the communication data is audio, and RTP (920) is used as a communication protocol.

The session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received this OK message 510 extracts, through the session control unit 110, the session information 900 and the peer-to-peer communication information 901 stored in the OK message and delivers them to the policy generating unit 210. The session control unit 110 transfers the OK message 512 to the session relay apparatus A (10a) through the packet transmitter/receiver 100. The policy generating unit 210 that has received the session information 900 and the peer-to-peer communication information 901 from the session control unit 110 holds the same information (511). In the process, the policy generating unit 210 may hold either the whole or at least the required part of the session information 900 or the peer-to-peer communication information 901. Also, the session control unit 110 may deliver either the whole or at

least the required part of the session information 900 and the peer-to-peer communication information 901 to the policy generating unit 210.

Upon similar transfer of the OK message 513
5 to the communication terminal A (15a) from the session relay apparatus A (10a) that has received the OK message 512, the communication terminal A (15a) that has received the OK message transmits an ACK message 514 indicating the start of the peer-to-peer
10 communication to the session relay apparatus A (10a).

Upon receipt of the ACK message 514, the establishment of the session is notified from the session control unit 110 to the policy generating unit 210 in the session relay apparatus A (10a). The policy
15 generating unit 210 that has received this notification registers in the policy management table 220 the session information and the peer-to-peer communication information held therein, while at the same time generating and delivering a QoS policy to a QoS policy
20 distribution unit 200 (515).

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing a table configuration as an example table configuration of the policy storage unit 220 of the session relay apparatus. Each entry is produced for each peer-to-peer
25 communication, i.e. each time the session is established. The policy storage unit 220 shown in Fig. 5 stores "Call-ID", "To tag" and "From tag" of the session information 800 shown in Fig. 4 for uniquely

identifying the session in SIP. Also, the policy storage unit 220 stores the address and the port number of the transmitter and the address and the port number of the destination contained in the peer-to-peer
5 communication information 801 shown in Fig. 4, and further the DSCP value indicating the priority relay control level of packets and the address of the next relay node for selecting a relay network.

Fig. 7 is a diagram for explaining an example
10 of the policy generated by the policy generating unit 210 of the session relay apparatus. The policy is described in PIB (Policy Information Base) format indicating the rules of the conditional operation type according to SPPI (Structure of Policy Provisioning
15 Information). PIB for Diffserv, for example, is laid down in RFC3317. According to the embodiment shown in Fig. 7, the operation (1001) of rewriting the DSCP value as 0x001010 is used for the packet meeting the conditions including the transmitter IP address of
20 192.168.10.1, the transmitter port number of 49170, the destination IP address of 192.168.20.1 and the destination port number of 49171. In this way, the QoS generated includes the QoS control classification conditions 1001 and the packet processing 1001 under
25 the same conditions. Thus, the DSCP value of the packet with the edge node 20 meeting the conditions is rewritten and the core node 30 executes the packet priority control based on the DSCP value.

The policy distribution unit 200 executes the process of setting the QoS policy generated by the policy generating unit 210, in the edge node 20a using the COPS protocol. For this purpose, the policy distribution unit 200 produces a decision message 516 in accordance with the COPS protocol using the QoS policy delivered from the policy generating unit, searches the communication terminal-relay node correspondence storage unit 230 by way of the transmitter IP address contained in the QoS policy, and transmits the produced decision message 516 to the edge node A (20a) accommodating the communication terminal A (15a). The policy in PIB format is encoded by BER (Basic Encoding Rules) of ASN.1 (Abstract Syntax Notation one) defined in ISO (International Organization for Standardization), and transmitted to the edge node as a decision message.

Fig. 6 is a diagram showing a table configuration representing an example configuration of the communication terminal-relay node correspondence storage unit 230 of the session relay apparatus. In this example, each entry corresponds to one communication terminal. The communication terminal-relay node correspondence storage unit 230 shown in Fig. 6 includes the IP address of a communication terminal, and the IP address of the edge node accommodating the particular communication terminal. The communication terminal-relay node correspondence

storage unit is set manually by the network manager or automatically by communication between the session relay apparatus, the edge node and the communication terminal.

- 5 The edge node A (20a) registers by retrieving the QoS control classification conditions and the packet processing from the QoS policy stored in the decision message 516 received on the one hand, and transmits a report message 517 indicating the complete
- 10 registration as a response to the session relay apparatus A (10a). The session relays apparatus A (10a) that has received the report message 517 transmits an ACK message 519 to the session relay apparatus B (10b) (518).
- 15 In the session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received the ACK message, the session control unit 110 notifies the policy generating unit 210 that the session has been established. The policy generating unit 210 that has received this notification registers
- 20 in the policy storage unit 220 the session information 900 and the peer-to-peer communication information 901 stored therein (520), and in accordance with the COPS protocol, generates and transmits the decision message 521 to the edge node B (20b) accommodating the
- 25 communication terminal B (10b) through the policy distribution unit 210.

The edge node B (20b) that has received the decision message 521 similarly registers the QoS

control classification conditions and the packet processing and transmits a report message 522 to the session relay apparatus B (10b). The session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received this report message
5 transmits an ACK message 524 to the communication terminal B (15b) (523). The receipt of this ACK message by the communication terminal B (15b) indicates that the session is established between the communication terminal A (15a) and the communication
10 terminal B (15b).

By the operation described above, the session is established between the communication terminals and the QoS policy is completely set in the relay network. The communication terminal A (15a) transmits the peer-
15 to-peer communication packet 525, and the edge node A (20a) sets the QoS control class, i.e. the DSCP value of the particular packet (526). In similar fashion, the edge node B (20b) sets the QoS control class for the peer-to-peer communication packet 528 sent from the
20 communication terminal B (15b) (527). In the network 40, the core node 30 executes the packet relay process by priority control in accordance with the order of priority set in the packet.

Fig. 8 is a sequence diagram showing the
25 communication process executed in the case where the communication terminal B (15b) terminates the peer-to-peer communication with the communication terminal A (15a). The communication terminal B (15b) transmits a

BYE message 601 indicating the end of the session to the session relay apparatus B (10b). The session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received this BYE message further transfers a BYE message 602 to the session
5 relay apparatus A (10a). The session relay apparatus A (10a) that has received this BYE message similarly transfers a BYE message 603 to the communication terminal A (15a). The communication terminal A (15a) that has received the BYE message transmits an OK
10 message 604 to the session relay apparatus A (10a).

In the session relay apparatus A (10a) that has received the OK message, the session control unit notifies the policy generating unit that the session has ended. The policy generating unit 210 that has
15 received this notification searches the policy management table 220 using "Call-ID", "To tag" and "From tag" stored in the OK message, deletes the corresponding entry from the policy storage unit 220, generates the QoS policy indicating the cancellation of
20 the QoS control and delivers the QoS policy to the policy distribution unit 200.

The policy distribution unit 200, using the COPS protocol, executes the process of setting in the edge node 20a the QoS policy generated by the policy
25 generating unit 210. The policy distribution unit 200 that has received the QoS policy indicating the cancellation of the QoS control generates a decision message 606 in accordance with the COPS protocol,

searches the communication terminal-edge node
correspondence table 230 for the edge node A (20a)
accommodating the communication terminal A (15a) and
distributes a decision message 606 to the edge node A
5 (20a).

The edge node A (20a) that has received the
decision message 606 deletes the corresponding QoS
policy setting (608), and sends a report message 607
indicating the complete deletion as a response to the
10 session relay apparatus A (15a).

The session relay apparatus A (10a) that has
received the report message 607 transmits an OK message
609 to the session relay apparatus B (10b). In the
session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received the
15 OK message, the end of the session is notified from the
session control unit 110 to the policy generating unit
210. The policy generating unit 210 that has received
this notification deletes the corresponding entry of
the policy from the internal policy storage unit 220
20 based on the information contained in the OK message.
The policy distribution unit 200, in order to instruct
the edge node 20b to cancel the policy setting,
prepares a decision message 611 in accordance with the
COPS protocol and sends it to the edge node B (20b)
25 (610).

The edge node B (20b) that has received the
decision message 611 deletes the QoS policy setting and
transmits a report message 612 to the session relay

apparatus B (10b). The session relay apparatus B (10b) that has received this report message transmits an OK message 614 to the communication terminal B (20b) (613). Through these steps, the peer-to-peer
5 communication is terminated and the corresponding QoS control is canceled.

Fig. 9 is an operation flowchart showing the process executed by the policy generating unit 210 included in the session relay apparatus 10 according to
10 the invention. The policy generating unit 210 initializes the policy storage unit 220 at the time of starting and then repeatedly executes the following-described process.

The policy generating unit 210 first checks
15 whether the establishment of a session has been detected or not. One method of detecting the session establishment consists in the notification from the session control unit 110. Upon detection of the session establishment, the policy generating unit 210
20 generates a policy for setting the DSCP value, from the session information and the peer-to-peer communication information in the INVITE message providing the session control message. The policy generating unit 210 registers the generated policy in the policy storage
25 unit 220, and through the policy distribution unit 200, sets a policy in the edge node 20 according to the COPS protocol.

In the case where the session is not

established or after the aforementioned process is executed upon detection of the session establishment, the policy generating unit 210 checks whether the end of the session has been detected or not. One method of
5 detecting the end of a session consists in the notification from the session control unit 110. Upon detection of the end of a session, the policy generating unit 210 searches the policy storage unit 220 with the session information in the OK message
10 providing the session control message as a key. The policy generating unit 210 generates a policy for clearing the DSCP value using the entry of the search result, and through the policy distribution unit 210, cancels the policy setting in the edge node 20
15 according to the COPS protocol. The corresponding entry of the policy storage unit 220 is deleted subsequently by the policy generating unit 210.

Fig. 10 shows a mesh configuration of the network using the session relay apparatus 10 according
20 to the invention as a communication network with a selectable relay network. Networks 40a, 40b, 40c exist as relay networks. The band of each network can be secured by selecting a relay network in accordance with the type of the peer-to-peer communication data. In
25 the case where the relay network designated by numeral 40a is selected by policy setting, for example, the address of the relay node 30aa connected to the relay network 40a is registered in the "relay network" item

of the policy storage unit 220 shown in Fig. 5. As a result, the session relay apparatus 10a transfers to the relay node 30aa those packets received from the communication terminal 15a which meet the required
5 conditions, and transmits them through the relay network 40a to the communication terminal 15b. This embodiment is effectively applicable to a case in which with different policies preset in the networks 40a, 40b and 40c, for example, a network using a policy
10 conforming with the packet transmitted from the communication terminal A 15a to the communication terminal B 15b is selected.

It will thus be understood from the foregoing description that according to this invention, the start
15 and end of the policy settable peer-to-peer communication are detected by a session relay apparatus, so that a policy can be set in each edge node accommodating a communication terminal at the start of communication, while the policy setting can be
20 canceled at the end of communication. Also, the need of the policy-setting operation by the operator is eliminated, thereby making it possible to prevent the packet relay delay which otherwise might occur in an edge node by the unrequired policy setting.

25 Embodiments of the invention are described above. Nevertheless, this invention is not limited to these embodiments, but as obvious to those skilled in the art, can be variously modifiable within the scope

of the appended claims without departing from the spirit of the invention.